

To: Ms. Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW; Room TW-B204
Washington, DC 20554

Received & Inspected

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FCC Mail Room

From: Eric Phoenix Mason AY6803
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Waynesburg, PA 15370

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RE: Appreciations

Dear Ms. Dortch,

I am prisoner serving time within the state of Pennsylvania and I have been incarcerated for the past (30) years for my crime and within that time as I am sure that you can imagine, so much has happen within my life over the course of time. I have lost my mother due to poor health and diabetes. During this time within my life and as well as hers, communication was very prevalent for the stabilization of my family and within the year of 1994, the phone rates were very costly to which neither myself nor my mother could pay for and as much as I wanted to be with my mother, even through these phone calls, it was hard and I wasn't the kind of person who would put even more hardship on my family because of me. At that time, I wasn't making much but pennies from my prison work job, but I sent those pennies out to my mother so that she could pay for my phone calls to her and you know how a mother feels about her son, she would always tell me to call and stop sending her my little earnings, but that wasn't something that I could do. My mother was sick and dying. For years, my mother worked hard to get what she earned in life and was paying the bills and saving up for her retirement like most people, and times was hard on her, us as a family and when I came to prison and was sentenced to a Life Sentence, it was hard on her and me as her son was suppose to be there for her when she needed me and I wasn't and that hurt our family a great deal. I was sent to a prison three and half hours away from her house, but she tried to make the visits there, but I knew that it was too much for her and her body. So we limited our visits to once a year and I wrote as much as I could. I wasn't much of a writer, never had the need to until then. There wasn't any way that I was going to pay the high cost of those phone calls then, and I knew that it hurt her a little bit not to hear my voice, but what could I do, I couldn't pay for but so much time and all of the phones were collect then in the 80's & 90's. But for the funds in which I did save, I sent home to help pay for these calls, but when you are only making \$34.00 a month and our calls were costing between \$8.00 to \$10.00 a call, I wasn't speaking to her that often and it was hard because my mother was slowly dying and was in and out of the hospital. As much as I wanted to talk with my mother during these times, I couldn't because of the cost. That was a great hardship for the both of us.

When I came to prison, my children were just born and i have really only gotten to know them through my letters, with an occasional phone call here and there on special occasions such as their birthdays, Christmas and a few other times. And with me, I couldn't put the burden on their mothers because I wanted to be within my children's life. Their mothers were working hard to raise my kids and supporting themselves, and how could I ask them to let me talk to my kids a little more when the phone bill kept rising with each call? Like I said, that wasn't something that I could do. And yes, truly there was a cost to all of this. Now that was twenty to thirty years ago and throughout the course of that time, I have spoken to them, but

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but not everyone within my family and for those in whom I haven't been speaking to, I have lost contact with them because of the lack of communications. I know that if I could have been able to call, I would still be in touch with my sister, brother and other family members, but because I didn't call and it wasn't like I didn't want to, I just couldn't ask any of them to pay for these high price phone calls. For many families, they would have loved to be able to speak to their love one, but they couldn't pay the phone bill which was rising with our calls and many families disconnected their collect calls within their phones. And it wasn't that they didn't love the person who was calling them collect, they just couldn't afford the cost of the call. And when this state finally allowed us to purchase prepaid calling time, that allowed people such as myself to save up and put funds on my phone account and it might be only \$10.00 a month and if I was calling my daughter in South Carolina, I would be able to make one call, or if I was calling my other daughter in Philadelphia, then I would get just under two calls. When my children were growing up, I didn't speak with them or their mothers, but I was writing to them and sending them cards and little gifts to keep in contact with them. But if I were able to call them, I would have a much better relationship with my kids than I do now and my kids are both thirty years of age. I have three grand kids in whom I have yet to speak with, But now thanks to you and everyone who has taken part in getting us these fair prices, I can get a \$10.00, \$15.00 or \$50.00 phone time and be able to speak to my daughters, grand kids, brother, sister, aunt and cousins and friends without any real hardship. I know that my family would accept my collect calls, but I still like to pay my own way and not rely on others to hold my hand all of the time. Ms. Dortch, with a \$10.00 phone card, I can make eleven calls a month, and would you believe that I didn't make eleven calls all of last year. Someone once taught me that it is better for a man to be able to stand on his own two feet before trying to walk on others. But within respects to that, I also have to honesty say that if not for the help of my woman, I wouldn't be able to do half of the things in which I am able to do for my family and I have to say that I have been blessed, but not everyone has an angel beside them like I do.

Ms. Dortch, these are hard times for many of us behind these walls and gates and as well as our families, but this change in which you have done, will truly go a very very very long way. I don't know if people really understand the battles in which you and everyone have fought, but know that I know and understand because over the years, we have been together within this fight. And out of respects for a fellow prisoner name: Mr. Jon Yount who passed away, he and you have been fighting this war for us and I and everyone here and especially the woman within my life, are very happy and on behalf of all of us, I would like to just say...

"T H A N K Y O U"

&

"M A Y T H E L O R D B L E S S Y O U"

You know something Ms. Dortch, I honesty think that I can that this will be one of the best holiday seasons that many of us will ever have or ever had. You have given us a special and priceless gift of love and heart to which we can now share with our love ones. Again I say thank you to everyone and please have a very happy holidays and a very Merry Christmas....

With great respects and appreciations...
Eric Phoenix Mason AV6803 & Ulrike Riedl